

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY EVANGELICALISM IN CANADA

The following historical and sociological studies provide context to evangelicalism in Canada. Contemporary Canadian historical and sociological scholarship generally applies the term “evangelical” in accordance with David Bebbington’s definition (1989): denominations, organizations and individuals whose faith and practice emphasize conversionism, biblicism, crucicentrism, and activism.

Christie, Nancy and Michael Gavreau. *Christian Churches and Their Peoples, 1840-1965: A Social History of Religion in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 2010. Christie and Gavreau demonstrate that religious attitudes in Canada had their own unique development. Canadian evangelicalism has always been pluralistic and fluid, unlike European and American evangelicalism. Christie and Gavreau disagree with histories that try to explain away evidence of religious belief.

Clarke, Brian and Stuart Macdonald. *Leaving Christianity: Changes Allegiances in Canada since 1945*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017. Clark and Macdonald, both theology professors, make extensive use of census data, denominational records, and polling surveys to show that evangelical church attendance has declined since the 1960s to the extent that many Canadians no longer have a memory of church to which to return. Church leaders need to prepare for ministry in the context of a post-Christian civil society.

Noll, Mark. *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1992. Noll concludes that Canadian Christianity differentiated itself from the state and resisted Christianity’s diminishing influence in the national culture less than American Christianity. He believes that Canadian and American Christianity are both in the wilderness, a situation that has rejuvenating potential on Christianity’s own terms.

Rawlyk, George A (ed.). *The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760-1990*. Burlington, Ontario: Welch Publishing Company Inc, 1990. This series of essays by prominent Canadian historians of religion provides an overview of Protestant development in Canada to 1990. John Stackhouse argues that the story of Canadian Protestantism after 1945 looks on the surface to be one of continuities, but the continuities hide major changes. The mainline denominations declined and lost their evangelical hegemony and the conservative evangelical denominations showed increasing vitality.

Rawlyk, G.A. *Is Jesus Christ Your Personal Saviour? In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s.* Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996. On the basis of surveys of 6,014 Canadians and 365 Canadian evangelicals and intensive interviews of 35 Canadian evangelicals, Rawlyk contends that the experientially oriented popular evangelicalism that he researched in the Maritimes of the 1800s is still surprisingly strong in Canada. The profile of Canadian evangelicals that emerged from the evidence suggests that they attend church regularly, are stronger in prayer than in Bible reading, and share their faith mainly by the way they live, most finding the label of "born again" culturally aggressive.

Reimer, Sam and Michael Wilkinson. *A Culture of Faith: Evangelical Congregations in Canada.* Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. Reimer and Wilkinson provide a comprehensive and detailed study of what makes congregations in five evangelical denominations vital, mainly through interviews of pastors and denominational leaders. Among the vitality factors they uncover are that the culture of faith provides a satisfying alternative to the contemporary secular culture, regular attenders of committed congregations find meaning and community at church, and church involvement, particularly as modeled by parents, is a major factor in lifelong retention. Vitality is not necessarily related to church growth as most Canadian congregations are small and unlikely to experience significant growth.

Reimer, Sam Harold. *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States.* Toronto & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. Reimer studies white evangelicals in four cities - two Canadian and two American. He finds that Canadian and American evangelicals continue to hold similar beliefs and morals with nuanced differences; e.g., political attitudes and irenicism. Reimer concludes that "influences internal to evangelicalism have shaped the religiosity of core members more than external cultural influences, minimizing regional differences" (160).

Stackhouse, John G. *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century: An Introduction to Its Character.* Vancouver: Regent College, 1998. In this highly readable history, Stackhouse argues that, during the twentieth century, Canadian evangelicals began to develop a common identity sufficient for cooperation as they differentiated themselves from the theological liberalism of the mainline churches. They maintained their prime loyalty to their denominations while loosely supporting institutions and organizations that promoted common beliefs and strategic objectives, like Trinity Western University and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Canadian evangelicalism steadily grew in influence even as the influence of the mainline denominations declined.

Thiessen, Joel. *The Meaning of Sunday: The Practice of Belief in a Secular Age.* Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. Thiessen conducted 90 detailed interviews with active attenders, marginal attenders, and non-attenders in Calgary to explore how formerly committed participants in evangelical life make the transition to rejection and disinterest. He sees a parallel between the development of Canada's inclusive civic culture and the rise of "cherry-picked faith," which in turn makes nonbelief respectable. Thiessen observes that all three groups view spiritual beliefs as a personal and private choice and marginal and non-attenders no longer prioritize attendance, despite efforts by evangelical churches to make participation more appealing.

Thiessen, Joel, Arch Wong, Bill McAlpine, and Keith Walker. *A Preliminary Look at Flourishing Congregations in Canada: What Church Leaders are Saying.* Calgary: Flourishing Congregations Institute, 2017. This book introduces the research agenda of FCI, of Ambrose University. Consisting of blog posts and research questions that FCI plans to pursue with church leader interviews, with a bibliography but no notes, it is a quick read that should stimulate deeper reflection and possible involvement in the research of the institute.

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